

Dan Devening

AIR Top 24

September 1 – December 1, 2007

In the spring of 2007 I was invited by Christina Lackner and Galerie Stadtpark to be an artist in residence for three months in AIR Top 24. For me, this was a very important opportunity to reconnect with my studio practice after several years of intense and all-consuming work as an instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Northwestern University. During this residency, my only self-imposed requirements were to give myself a lot of freedom to explore, take risks and go in entirely new directions if necessary. In addition, part of my project was a personal goal to complete a series of about 40 works on paper that I initiated in my Chicago studio. These works were intentionally left conceptually and formally open with the idea that material and ideas would develop through investigatory drawings, photographic diaries and influences that might result from travel, seeing exhibitions, the landscape, studio visits with artists, and anything else that might cross my path. Not surprisingly, all of these influences entered into this projects to very satisfying results.

I spent most of the beginning of my residency connecting with the landscape around the Danube and through regular trips to Vienna to visit exhibitions and get to know the city. In Krems, I spent a lot of time exploring the hills and the river; in Vienna, I made connections with galleries, visited museums and made appointments with artists, all of which made a strong impression on me personally and professionally. The connections I made here will be long lasting and will be one of the most valuable aspects of my stay in Austria.

During this early part of my residency, I was producing pages and pages of drawings in my sketchbooks; many of these early drawings become the structures and images that grew to become the final works on paper that I spent the remaining period completing. The paperworks are made with a vinyl paint called Flashe which produces a beautiful flat surface that holds great interest to me. In the early stages of the process, these works develop with fields of color that I lay on the paper surface with rollers. Afterwards, I respond to these first-layer impressions through the drawings that came from the sketchbook. From these linear graphic thumbnail sketches I transfer, cut away and make stencils in order to create a strong visual and graphic version of the original quick sketch. I went through stacks of these paper pieces; some were inspired and others were discarded after it was clear that they would be unsuccessful. In the end, I was able to produce a strong body of work that I expect will continue feed more studio practice upon my return to Chicago.

My residency with the AIR has been a valuable and important part of my personal and professional creative development. During this time, I relearned how to focus and concentrate on my work and be inspired and open to experiences that previously may have been outside of my range of possibilities. I took many risks in my drawings and paintings with both the materials and subject. I also established some very strong relationships with other artists in residence as well as in Krems and Vienna; I look forward to the experiences that will come from these personal and professional friendships. The residency was important for me not only because of the work I completed, but also for the inspiring artists I met and the stimulating conversations that naturally result when creative people come together.

I am very grateful to have been awarded this residency and will consider it one of the important periods of my life.

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November 2007